



State Of Connecticut

SENATE
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

Senator Donald E. Williams, Jr.
Senate President Pro Tempore
On

SB 1146 AAC Cross Endorsements

Committee on GAE

March 25, 2013

This bill would prohibit a candidate from appearing on more than one line for the same office, and it would prohibit a party from endorsing a candidate who is not a registered member of that party.

Since 1981, the State of Connecticut has allowed for candidates to appear more than once on the ballot for the same office. From time to time there's been increased amount of this form of cross-endorsement activity. For example, A Connecticut Party cross-endorsed candidates who appeared on another party line for the same office for a couple of campaign cycles.

While this led to some voter confusion, with voters trying to vote for the same candidate on multiple lines, the old voting machines would not permit a voter to cast more than one vote for the same office, and absentee ballots were hand-counted, so there wasn't a significant over vote problem.

In 2007, the General Assembly amended the statutes to make it easier for minor parties to cross-endorse candidates who would also be appearing on another party line. As a result, we've experienced a significant increase in candidates appearing on two or more lines for the same office over the last couple of election cycles.

At the same time, we've transitioned from the old voting machines, to optical scan machines with paper ballots. Now, we are witnessing a significant number of voters over-voting.

This committee continues to hear from election officials about the need to make statutory changes to address the issue of over-voting. We've also heard from election officials about the confusion that stems from how to attribute those votes – which party does such a vote get attributed to? Currently our statutes require election officials to apportion those votes based upon the percentage break-down of the non-over-vote-ballots. But it can be confusing, especially after a very busy and long Election Day.

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In 2012, for example, there was a state senate district where two candidates appeared on five different lines for the same office. Election officials in almost every town in that district had to review their tallies and change their numbers in the days that followed that election.

Forty four states prohibit candidates from appearing on more than one line for the same office in order to avoid the confusion that we are encountering more frequently here in Connecticut. In 1997, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states may prohibit political candidates from appearing on the ballot as the nominees of more than one political party. The Court found that a Minnesota law that prohibited this type of ballot fusion was "a reasonable regulation of parties and ballots that reduced election disorder and did not severely burden a political party's associational rights."